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GRIZZLY TRIPLE JUMPER JOHNSON
HOPES HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF
IN THE CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS

by
Dave Guffey
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MISSOULA--

With the Big Sky Conference Track Championships just a couple of weeks away, University of Montana triple jumper Billy Johnson prepares to defend his title.

Johnson, a lithe 6-2, 165-pounder, hopes history repeats itself May 21-22 at Bronco Stadium in Boise, Idaho.

In last year's conference championships Johnson entered the meet with a best of 46-6. The mark, definitely a respective one, add one which placed him among the top jumpers in the conference, did not turn too many heads.

This season a severe ankle injury and general health problems have hampered the progress of the 20 year old from Great Falls. His best mark this season is, you guessed it, 46-6.

Last year Johnson soared 48-1 in THE meet--almost two feet over his previous best--to win the title. You can see why he hopes history repeats in 1979.

Because of what happened last time around, Johnson feels it's within his capabilities to do the same thing in Boise.

"I'm disappointed I don't have a better mark this year," said the blond-haired political science/economics major. "But it turned out alright last year as far as the Big Sky meet goes. I'd definitely like to win it again this year. I'd like to get a better mark before the meet this year. It'd really help my confidence."

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GRIZZLY TRIPLE JUMPER JOHNSON HOPES HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

Johnson, a junior, had an "excellent fall workout," according to head coach Marshall Clark. However, injuries impaired his progress during the indoor season. The result was a disappointing sixth-place finish in the indoor meet. It was only the second time Johnson had a chance to jump since an operation (hernia), however.

"Billy could be a 50-, 51-foot jumper," said Clark. "He has all the tools, plus he works very, very hard. He will be a big factor for us in the conference meet. Northern Arizona has a big jumper (Derek Shelton, 50-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ W), but I expect Billy to be in the top 3."

Johnson is currently ranked fourth in the Big Sky, only 7 inches off the No. 2 jumper.

As a senior at Billings West High (he also went to C.M. Russell for two years), Johnson won the triple jump in the state meet. His personal best as a prep was 45-9. He also competed in the long jump, low hurdles and ran on the relay teams.

He feels he should be near 48 feet more often, and says he has had a lot of trouble with his step lately. With the conference showdown rapidly approaching he has stopped competing in the long jump to concentrate on his specialty.

"I've been working on it (his step) the past couple of weeks, and now I think I'm finally ready for a big jump. I need one right now. Yeah, I guess you could say I hope history repeats itself."

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